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Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council expresses concern at conflict in and around Nagorny Karabakh region; urges parties to conclude political agreement as soon as possible.

+ Secretary-General, in Sydney, has meetings with Australian Foreign Minister and Special Representative for Human Rights in Cambodia.

+ Aldo Ajello to deliver message from Secretary-General to Government of Rwanda regarding recent killings of internally displaced persons.

+ Secretary-General asks Security Council to extend UNMOT mandate pending report on outcome of talks between Tajik parties in Moscow.

+ FAO expresses concern about world food security; notes marginal production gains in developing countries and declining availability of food aid.

+ Government of Haiti says it is committed to peace and stability, and to cooperating with UNMIH; stresses importance of free, democratic and honest elections.

+ Ninth United Nations Congress on Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders to be held in Cairo from 29 April to 8 May.

+ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to hold twelfth session in Geneva from 1 to 19 May.

+ Board of Trustees of International Research and Training Institute for Advancement of Women meets in Santo Domingo.

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The Security Council today expressed satisfaction that the cease-fire in the Nagorny Karabakh region had held since it was agreed upon on 12 May 1994. However, in a statement read out by its President, Karel Kovanda (Czech Republic), the Council reiterated its concern at the conflict in and around

the Nagorny Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, and at the tensions between Azerbaijan and Armenia. It expressed particular concern at recent violent incidents, and emphasized the importance of using the mechanism of direct contacts for the settlement of incidents, as agreed upon last February. It urged the parties to the conflict to take all necessary measures to prevent such incidents in future.

The Council reiterated its support for the efforts of the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Conference to assist negotiations for a political agreement on the settlement of the conflict. It stressed that the parties themselves bore the main responsibility for reaching a peaceful settlement, and stressed the urgency of concluding a political agreement. The Council emphasized that such an agreement was a prerequisite for the deployment of a multinational Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) peace-keeping force. It confirmed its readiness to provide continuing political support, including through a resolution on the possible deployment of an OSCE force following an agreement for cessation of the conflict. The United Nations also stood ready to provide technical advice and expertise.

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Continuing his official visit to Australia, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has had a meeting with Foreign Minister Gareth Evans. They discussed reform of the United Nations, including the expansion of the Security Council, peace-building, and the strengthening of democratic institutions. They also dealt with the situation in Burundi and preventive action by the Organization. The Secretary-General briefed Mr. Evans on his recent talks in Indonesia on East Timor, and reviewed the prospects of his good offices in that regard.

The Secretary-General also met with the Special Representative for Human Rights in Cambodia, Justice Michael Kirby. That meeting was attended by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Marrack Goulding, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Jose Ayala Lasso. They discussed the mission to be undertaken by Mr. Goulding next week to discuss the future of the Human Rights Centre in Cambodia with the Cambodian Government.

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The Secretary-General has asked Aldo Ajello to deliver a personal message from him to the Government of Rwanda following the recent killings of internally displaced people by the Rwandese Army, according to a United Nations spokesman. Mr. Ajello, who recently served as the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Mozambique, left New York today.

Meanwhile, women and children have been allowed to leave a medical centre which has been surrounded by Rwandese troops in the Kibeho camp. Some "hard-core Hutu militants" are still in the centre, and are armed and unwilling to give themselves up, the spokesman said, quoting reports from Rwanda.

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The Secretary-General has asked the Security Council to extend the mandate of the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT) until he can report on the outcome of talks between the Tajik parties, according to a spokesman for the Organization. The talks between the Government of Tajikistan and the opposition, which were convened by Special Envoy Ramiro Piriz-Ballon, concluded in Moscow today.

The spokesman noted that the continuation of UNMOT depended on the maintenance of the cease-fire in Tajikistan. That cease-fire expired today.

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The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has expressed concern about world food security, noting only minor improvements in the situation in developing countries. The FAO's Committee on World Food Security is currently meeting in Rome.

World production of staple foods increased by some 2 per cent from 1993 to 1994, according to FAO Director-General Jacques Diouf. However, most of that increase occurred in developed countries, due mainly to more coarse grain production in the United States. In the developing countries and low-income food-deficit countries, which are most vulnerable to crises, the production increase was only marginal. Meanwhile, higher international prices for wheat and rice meant higher import bills for needy countries.

Mr. Diouf expressed particular concern about the incidence of chronic undernutrition, which affected at least 800 million people in the developing countries alone. That situation was exacerbated by the declining availability of food aid. Total cereal food aid committed for 1994-1995 had fallen below 10 million tons for the first time in more than a decade.

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The Government of Haiti has said it is deeply committed to peace and stability in the country. In a letter to the Security Council President 25 April, it said the Haitian people had demonstrated their readiness to cooperate with the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH) for the sake of economic and social development. The Government made those comments in response to the Council President's statement on Haiti last Monday.

The Haitian Government stressed its commitment to organizing freee, democratic and honest elections. It was counting on the success of the upcoming national elections to make the process of restoring democracy irreversible. Those elections would be held on scheduled, the Government added.

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The Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders will be held in Cairo from 29 April to 8 May. The event -- the first United Nations Crime Congress to be held in Africa -- is being hosted by the Egyptian Government. Multinational crime syndicates, money laundering, crimes against the environment, violent criminality and victims' rights will be at the top of the agenda.

The Congress will be attended by delegates of more than 140 governments and representatives of international agencies and non-governmental organizations, along with jurists, senior police officials, criminologists and other experts from around the world. They will compare national experiences, endorse policies and take steps to improve international cooperation in the crime control field.

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The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights will hold its twelfth session in Geneva from 1 to 19 May. The Committee will consider the measures taken by the Republic of Korea, the Philippines, Portugal, Suriname and Sweden to implement the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. There are currently 131 States parties to the Covenant.

In addition to the five reports scheduled for consideration, the Secretary-General has received initial reports from Mauritius, Algeria, Paraguay, El Salvador and Guatemala; a second periodic report from the Dominican Republic; and third periodic reports from Colombia, Norway, Ukraine and Spain.

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The Board of Trustees of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women has begun its fifteenth session in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. The Institute was established 20 years ago to promote research and training programmes on the integration and mobilization of women in development.

In her opening statement, the President of the Board of Trustees, Ms. Postel-Coster, said there would be no sustainable development, no end to the violation of human rights, and no equality as long as women's concerns were marginalized. For that reason, the empowerment of women had become such a prominent concept. To better fulfil its mandate, the Institute's place in the interface between research, training, communication and policy should be redefined.

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